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DE RUEHOS #0278 0541732
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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6651
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 6947

UNCLAS LAGOS 000278

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV CASC NI
SUBJECT: ONITSHA RIOTS: SECTARIAN VIOLENCE CONTINUES, NO
AMCITS HURT

REF: ABUJA 432

¶1. (SBU) In response to the recent disturbances in Maiduguri (reftel), lethal reprisals occurred in Onitsha and Nnewi, Anambra State on February 21 and 22. Press reports allege between 50 to 100 deaths. Nigerian Red Cross Director Abiodun Orebiyi said his volunteers counted 48 deaths and over 300 injured. On February 22, five individuals, including an Amcit were targeted by rioters, but were not taken hostage or injured. The Amcit is now safe. Sources stated the violence in Onitsha has subsided.

¶2. (U) Apparently, the violence in Onitsha was sparked when the bodies of Anambra State indigenes killed in the Maiduguri disturbances were returned home, according to Anambra State Governor Chris Ngige. Onitsha is a large market town, perhaps the largest in Southeast Nigeria, which is predominately Christian Igbo. However, a sizable number of Hausa traders have shops in Onitsha and have lived there for years. Governor Ngige has imposed a curfew in Onitsha and other Anambra cities, including Nnewi.

¶3. (SBU) Orebiyi said the violence in Onitsha has subsided.

¶4. (SBU) A Canadian High Commission official informed us that five individuals (Amcit Joseph Fithian, one Canadian, and three Tunisians) working on a project for Nortel were accosted on February 22. No one was injured and they were transported to Aba, Anambra State by Mobile Police.

BROWNE